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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TIRANA 000728

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR PM/WRA:DAVE DIAZ and EUR/SCE:JISMAIL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [AL](#)
SUBJECT: NEW GOVERNMENT INCREASES FOCUS ON DEMIL

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¶1. (SBU) Summary. During his November 11-14 trip to Washington, Defense Minister Imami will share his government's recent impressive accomplishments in demilitarization. Prime Minister Berisha has accelerated the completion date for demilitarization from 2015 to ¶2013. Although likely unachievable, the target has served as a catalyst for momentum in the MoD's demilitarization efforts. Last week, the Government of Albania appointed two deputy ministers of defense, one of whom will chair a demilitarization executive committee. Progress at industrial demilitarization facilities continues at a steady pace and a third site is likely to open at Gramsh within the month. Open detonation will also proceed throughout the fall. In meetings with Imami, U.S. interlocutors should praise the GOA's increased, concerted and successful efforts in demilitarization and underscore U.S. support for an upcoming NAMSa assistance project. Increased U.S. financial support is a reflection of Albania's effective policy and tangible success in demilitarization. We should urge Imami to give his deputy minister real authority to coordinate Albania's demil efforts. End Summary.

A SUCCESSFUL TRACK RECORD

¶2. (U) Berisha's increased attention has increased the momentum of demil efforts. To date this year, of the approximately 100,000 excess tons of munitions, the MoD has demilitarized approximately 4,538 tons. Of that, the Mjekes industrial line has dismantled 1,672 tons of 160mm mortars, the Polican industrial line has dismantled 858 tons of 82mm mortars, and AAF EOD teams have destroyed 2,008 tons of various munitions by open detonation. Both Mjekes and Polican are reviewing options for adding additional lines and shifts. In early December, the OSCE will deliver six additional band-saws for the two facilities, which will help increase production. Additionally the MOD has prepared a third industrial facility in Gramsh (south-central Albania) to handle 37mm mortars. Test runs have been successful and the line is expected to begin work next week. Test runs have also been successfully completed on a U.S. funded incinerator to destroy light ammunition and the incinerator should begin work in the coming weeks. The Ambassador and Defense Minister intend to visit the demilitarization sites and hold a ceremony for the incinerator in November.

NEW DEPUTY MINISTERS

¶3. (SBU) On November 5, Prime Minister Berisha appointed two new Deputy Ministers of Defense - Arian Starova and Ekrem Spahiu. (Note: Deputy Minister Zana Zhuka will also remain in her position, bringing the total deputy ministers to three. End Note.) Spahiu explained to Poloff that the Minister has given him two concrete responsibilities: to chair the committee on demilitarization, and to chair a new committee on the elimination of excess military equipment. According to Spahiu, Starova, a previous Foreign

Minister and founder of the NATO Association of Albania, will manage NATO issues and the foreign relations aspects of MoD's work.

MOVING UP THE TIMETABLE

¶4. (SBU) Several MoD sources have stated that PM Berisha has given strict orders that the demilitarization schedule must be expedited by two years, with final completion in 2013. It should be noted that the next national elections will be held in 2013. The new deadline is similar to the one for opening of the Durres-Kukes road, which was moved up to before the 2009 elections, in spite of professional advice that this deadline was unachievable. (Note: It is worth noting that shortly after the 2009 elections, the Durres-Kukes road closed again to allow for completion of work and will not open until at least May 2010). U.S. experts involved in demil have noted that if all goes well, and planned additional efforts are actually realized, the GOA could come close to meeting the 2013 deadline, but will still fall short. NAMSA advisors have expressed concern that the accelerated pace may have on security but are still supportive of Albanian efforts.

U.S. MESSAGE TO IMAMI ON DEMIL

¶5. (SBU) In meetings with Imami in Washington next week, U.S. interlocutors will want to recognize Albania's successes and express continued support for Albania's efforts in demil. The momentum is consistent and often exceeds targets. (Note: The Ambassador also relayed this message in a reception last week hosted by the Defense Attache and attended by Americans and Albanians involved in demil). We will also want to stress our support for a future NAMSA project to assist Albania's efforts. While MoD support for such a project was lukewarm this summer, Defense Minister Imami has expressed support for NAMSA's assistance in several recent public statements.

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We will want to bolster him in this support. We should also note our intention to increase assistance at Polican to include upgrades and a potential second and third line. Imami will also be happy to hear of our work to take over operations at one of the open pit ranges (Bize). Lastly, we should stress that with Deputy Minister Spahiu chairing the demil committee, Imami should entrust him with real authority to represent Imami and make decisions, an authority that to date has been lacking in all other MOD demil coordinators.